

# THE QUIVER

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"It was a fair picture"—p. 35.

## JOHN HESKETH'S CHARGE.

BY ALTON CLYDE, AUTHOR OF "UNDER FOOT," ETC. ETC.

### CHAPTER VII.—THE STRANGER'S ERRAND.

THE mysterious visitor was gone. Mr. Ashton watched him open the garden gate and pass out, accompanied by a parting growl from Rolla, who still resented his intrusion and fused to be reconciled to it. Before he turned away, the stranger looked back on the peaceful scene he was leaving, it might be with regret on account of the errand which had taken him to the cottage, and something of pity for

the white-haired old man to whom it would bring such care and trouble.

"These things isn't pleasant to think about," muttered the man, taking off his hat as if its weight oppressed him. "After all, it can't be helped, and I've only done my duty; if I hadn't found them out another would."

But, in spite of these self-assurances, he felt uncomfortable as he gave another glance at the grey, ivied cottage, looking so tranquil in the waning light; then turned and went his way, wondering how the old man's trouble would end.

The departure of the man who had been the messenger of evil was a relief both to father and son. On that evening, when the shadow of a new trouble had fallen between them, they were glad to be alone. Mr. Ashton stood leaning against the side of the porch as if he felt in need of some support; it might have been noticed that his tall figure stooped wearily like one whose strength sinks under a burden. The old man still sat with his hand shading his eyes, so he did not see his son's ghastly face. It was well for him to be spared that addition to his grief. It was his voice that broke the silence.

"You say nothing, Alfred; but you must blame me, and you are hurt at my want of confidence. I can feel it in your manner. You think I did wrong to keep it from you; and you are right, for you have always been a good son. Forgive me, Alfred! I did it for the best, and I was anxious to assist George."

The tone of humble appeal went to the son's heart. Sensitive for his father as for himself, he could not bear to let the old man feel himself put on his defence; it seemed to revolt against his sense of what was due to those silver hairs, and jarred against his lifelong affection and respect for the honourable old man, who had always striven to do his duty to the best of his knowledge, and deserved well at the hands of his children.

Mr. Ashton stooped and took one of the wrinkled hands in his, gently as a woman might have done.

"Father, you forget you are not bound to account to me for your actions, neither have I the right to judge, still less to blame, anything you have done. I do not need to be told that you acted for the best; I know it, as I do the motives that led you to become surety for my Cousin George, and I can honour its generosity, even though I may question its prudence."

The old man shook his head. "I know I did wrong, Alfred—wrong to you, for it was like shutting you from my heart and treating you as a stranger; my own good son, who never crossed my wishes or gave me a day's uneasiness in your life. Yes, I am to blame; it is bringing trouble into this house when I ought to be doing my part to lighten the burden which is crushing your life. It is no use,

Alfred, trying to deceive me by always showing the best side of things. I should be blind if I didn't see you're wearing out your days with care and overwork, fighting with the poverty that has always kept you down, while men not half so worthy have been climbing over your head."

The sight of the old man's distress and the reproaches which he heaped upon himself were inexpressibly painful to Mr. Ashton. He tried to turn the current of his thoughts.

"Do not fret about these things, father; if my worldly lot is not all that could be wished, I can enumerate blessings that strike the balance pretty evenly on the other side, and work is not a hardship, at least, I know that you did not consider it so in your own working days. But about the bond, father. I understand from this letter"—opening it as he spoke—"that you became surety with James Marples for the sum of five hundred pounds, value of goods advanced to my cousin, Captain Kendrick."

"Yes; George thought it would be a good opening for him to speculate, as there was a large demand for English goods in California. The ship was his own, and having only a part cargo he took out with him one thousand pounds worth of goods, paying half of the money, the remainder guaranteed by two sureties to be paid in nine months. George applied to me as his nearest relative, and I agreed. It was doing no more than a friend was ready to do, for he had no other claim on James Marples. Then I knew the lad's word was to be depended on, and as my circumstances seemed good at the time, the risk didn't seem greater than I might venture to take on myself."

Mr. Ashton referred again to the letter in his hand, as he said, "The stated term having passed without bringing any news of Captain Kendrick or his vessel, and the bill being considerably overdue, the merchants, Messrs. Robinson and Co., apply to you for the payment of the five hundred, the bankruptcy and sudden death of James Marples having made you responsible for the whole amount."

"Yes, Alfred, that is all too true; I should have had the notice before, but the merchants did not know I had left the farm, so the letter was sent there; that caused the delay."

"And now that it has come, father, and we have reason to fear the worst about poor George, all that remains for us is to think how it is to be met."

A low groan broke from the old man.

"To think that it should come to this! debt, and in my old age—that has always been the dread of my life, even in my darkest days, when crops were failing, and everything going wrong, I managed to keep clear of debt. I would have given the last farthing sooner than have that millstone hanging about my neck! But, Alfred," he continued, excitedly, "whatever comes, this money must not be taken from you and the child. I will not have you

trying to pinch it out of your narrow income; sooner than that I would go to prison."

"Hush, father! I cannot hear you talk like that."

But old David Ashton would not be silenced.

"That is why I wanted to keep it secret until I knew that George was safe. When no letter came, and the first dreadful doubt about him seemed to be coming true, I was afraid to tell you, because I knew you would be doing injury to yourself to save me. But I will not have it so, Alfred; boy and man, you have always obeyed me, and you must do it still."

At that moment the breeze wafted the sound of cheerful young voices, and warned the schoolmaster that they might expect to be interrupted. Then for the first time he mentioned the presence of the two young men, whom his father had not noticed.

"I should like you just to speak to John Hesketh, father; for he came round for the purpose of seeing you. But the air is getting cool; let us go indoors, and wait for them there."

As he spoke he handed him his crutch, and leaning somewhat heavily on his son's arm, the old man limped into the house. The trouble was already telling upon him; he looked very old and broken that night.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### THE TWO FRIENDS.

It was getting late in the evening when the young men left the schoolmaster's cottage. Mr. Ashton lingered over his good night to John Hesketh, and held his hand while he exacted a promise that he would repeat his visit soon. In his anxiety to comfort his father, and preserve appearances before the young people, he had exerted himself to talk and assume cheerfulness which he did not feel.

But John Hesketh was not deceived; for by some fine sympathy of intuition he detected the well-meant effort, and saw the shadow of care which it was intended to disguise. Pondering over chance words which Mr. Ashton had dropped to him in confidence that evening, and recalling the stranger whom he had seen in the porch, he could not help connecting his visit with some new cause for anxiety in the mind of his old master.

Eva and her father went to the gate with their visitors, tempted, perhaps, by the beauty of the summer evening. The moon was at its full, bathing everything in a silver flood, the air laden with fragrance as they passed through the garden, with the cool dewdrops lying thickly on the grass, and casketed like gems within the folded petals of the sleeping flowers.

The young men would have been glad to linger longer over their farewell, each feeling unwilling to go. Edward Arden looked with regretful longing towards the garden path, where he had walked and

talked with Eva during those golden-winged minutes, when he had taken no note of the flight of time. When would another of those charmed hours fall into his life? But John—plain, plodding, practical John Hesketh—what had he to long for and regret? there was no sweet bit of romance to give a background of colour to his life.

Edward felt sorry for his eccentric companion even while he rejoiced in his own richer experience, feasting on the memories and impressions of that night, with his own favoured lot gaining more and more by force of comparison. He lamented his friend's stoical insensibility, and pitied the bad taste that seemed to seek the society of the father instead of the daughter, and apparently gave the preference to his dry, scholarly talk.

As they went together down the lane they turned round once and saw the schoolmaster and his daughter still standing at the gate looking after them.

It was a fair picture which each of the two gathered into his heart. Eva, standing there with the moonlight resting on her head like a silver crown, her father's arm thrown round her, and her pure young face uplifted to his with a smile, apparently listening to something he was saying. Taking no care for the morrow, but happy and contented in the present, just as a trusting child is happy and content. Yet even then the shadows of change were stealing across the threshold of her sheltered life, and every day that dawned was bringing her nearer to a time of empty, dreary heart-ache.

Edward Arden stood and gazed as if some spell of fascination fixed him to the spot, when John Hesketh's grave voice roused him.

"Come, Ned, we must not loiter any longer; it is getting late. See, they are going in."

But the young man lingered as long as it was possible to obtain a glimpse of Eva.

"What a sweet little thing she is, Hesketh! it is a pleasure only to look at her."

John smiled quietly, and Edward continued, "Don't you think so yourself, old fellow? If you know a pretty face when you see one, you must own that Eva Ashton is a beauty."

"I can't say that I have thought of her in that light," replied John, musingly; "but I know that she makes me think of snowdrops; she seems so like one of the pure white blossoms that come out in the early spring."

Edward laughed. "I have no such poetical fancies, Hesketh. I don't think of her as a flower, but the prettiest girl about the neighbourhood, not even excepting my sister Carrie. I have seen none to be compared to our organist's daughter."

What was it that made John Hesketh wince at these allusions to Eva as if the freedom of their tone was pain to him? Why did he shrink from each light mention of her name, and find something

to chafe his refined sense even in his friend's praise of her? Edward Arden would have been sorely puzzled if he had watched the workings of John's face at that moment, but it is doubtful whether he would have groped his way to the truth.

They walked on in silence for some minutes, Edward carelessly swinging his slender cane, and occasionally humming a snatch of a gay tune, like one who carried a light heart. Their way lay in the same direction, John Hesketh, as usual during his brief visits to the village, having accepted the night's hospitality at a small farmhouse near Lowfield, rented by a childless old couple, who were much attached to him.

Edward was the first to speak.

"John, old fellow, it seems to me that I'm bound, in a sense, to tell you everything about myself, whether I like it or not. The day that you fished me up from the bottom of the river seems to have given you a sort of claim upon me."

"No claim, except what your own gratitude creates, Ned; but if I can do you good at any time—I mean if my advice can be of service——"

Here he was interrupted.

"You always do me good when we're together, Hesketh; you know my failings better than I do myself, and your advice is a kind of ballast that keeps the boat from heeling over. I could even bear to be snubbed by you, and that is what I would not take from any one else, except my dear old father."

And the gentleman's son took within his own soft palms one of the large, work-roughened hands, and expended the warmth of his feelings in a hearty grasp; and John Hesketh in his turn looked into the frank, handsome face, and hoped in his heart that no after coldness or estrangement would ever come between himself and this the only friend of his own age whom his proud, shy nature had drawn towards himself.

"Well, Ned, where is this talk drifting us; do I guess right that you have something to tell me?"

"Yes, old fellow, there is something, and—and it is about Eva Ashton."

John Hesketh started; a sharp spasm seemed to have struck through his heart, and he bit his lip to hide its quivering.

So soon; was it coming so soon, that which he had been vaguely dreading? He controlled himself by an effort, and said quietly, "Go on, Ned, I am ready to listen."

#### CHAPTER IX.

##### LIONEL ELLIOTT.

MRS. ARDEN received her daughter's hurried announcement with a smile which told that the interruption was anything but unwelcome. A few seconds afterwards there was a low knock at the drawing-room door, proving that Caroline's quick ears had not deceived her, for the new arrival was

Lionel Elliott. Her mother—the most simple of matrons—had nearly committed an embarrassing blunder, in her innocence, by expressing aloud her wonder that Carrie had been able to distinguish Mr. Elliott's step, but the objectionable sentence was checked before it had gone too far by a timely admonition from her daughter's eyes, and a hurried, "Nonsense, mamma! what are you going to say?"

Upon which a soft pink flush overspread the mother's face, and her blue eyes opened a little wider, as if just realising that she had been unwittingly on the verge of saying something that would have caused annoyance to Caroline. The young lady's words had been spoken too low to be overheard by the young man, and the slight bit of pantomime that took place on his entrance escaped his notice.

Lionel Elliott, in whom the master of Lowfield took such interest, was the only son of a clergyman who had died a few years previously, stricken down in the midst of his useful life by an epidemic fever which had been raging among the poor of his district. The widow had a scanty yearly income which partially supported her, but the son had nothing to inherit from his father, except his honourable name, and his virtues and high principles.

Lionel resided with his widowed mother in London, where he was making steady progress in the art to which he was devoting his life. Some of the young sculptor's works had already been favourably noticed for their originality and masterly skill.

He had been a guest at Lowfield for several weeks, and it was probable that his stay might extend some time longer, for by the kindness of a nobleman whose estate lay in the neighbourhood, and who was known as a liberal patron of art, the young man was privileged to visit his galleries, and take studies from its fine collection of ancient statuary. As might have been inferred from the conversation between Mrs. Arden and her husband, their visitor had continued to make himself a very agreeable addition to the family circle at Lowfield.

Edward liked the young sculptor, and showed it in his own easy, good-natured way, and greatly to his father's satisfaction, never resented having him so often quoted as an example for his imitation. Caroline alone was reserved in the expression of her opinions. It was not known what she really thought of her father's guest, even when he had been domesticated with them for weeks; it was doubtful whether she liked him for his own sake, or merely tolerated him on account of her father; yet Lionel Elliott was unquestionably one who might be fully credited with the power to win for himself the regard of any woman whose affections were not pre-engaged. He was not handsome in the literal sense of the term; his features would not bear critical dissection like a Greek model; but taken as a living human face full of thought, and life, and power, it was certain that



it would never be overlooked in a crowd, or passed by with the mass, as showing the same dull, dead level of uniformity; and it was equally certain that wherever he might be, he would stand out as the representative of a type.

He was soon chatting pleasantly with the mother and daughter, as much at home in the Lowfield drawing-room as in his own back studio in his mother's modest little house at Clapham.

"Any girl might be excused for falling in love with him," Mrs. Arden whispered to herself, as she listened to the soft modulations of the well-cultivated voice, and watched the animated play of expression in his eyes as he talked to Caroline, and sketched for her amusement the programme of his day of hard work in the gallery at the Hall.

"You are really a model of industry, Mr. Elliott, and I must credit you with an exhaustless fund of patience, or you would get tired of all this persistent grinding at one thing, and your daily journeys to that grim old wilderness of a Hall, which you make as faithfully as a pilgrim would go to his shrine."

It was Caroline who spoke, smiling upon him in a manner that would have been very welcome to the young man, if the effect had not been marred by the doubtful curve of her ripe lips, and something in the tone of her voice which could easily be construed into an expression of pity. As he did not attempt to interrupt her, she went on: "I suppose that is one way of realising what the poet says, 'To shun delights and live laborious days.' Only think of intelligent beings spending their lives, chipping bits of senseless marble, often with no other result than the production of indifferent copies of nature which the world does not care for. Excuse me, Mr. Elliott," for she saw the sensitive colour rising in his face, "it cannot be necessary to remind you that my remarks are merely general," and she gave him another of the smiles into which she could throw such fascination when it pleased her; but her words had carried a sting which it was not easy to withdraw.

Mrs. Arden moved uneasily in her chair, and glanced at the little antique clock on the mantel, wishing it was time for her husband to join them. She did not mind the young people monopolising

the talk as they did, she was generally content to sit still and listen, but she disliked the turn which the conversation had taken, it was too personal, and something in Caroline's manner made her feel hot and uncomfortable.

Lionel bowed as he said, "Certainly, Miss Arden, I acquit you of intending to descend to personalities, but allow me to say that I consider your remarks unduly severe; conscientious labour of any kind ought to command our respect, even where the power of the worker falls short of the will. It is good to live for a purpose, and lives spent in patient striving after an ideal must be far nobler than the same lives wasted in unproductive indolence."

The young lady replied with an expressive arching of her fine eyebrows. "Very logically argued, Mr. Elliott; I shall not attempt to contest a point so ably defended. But you must not imagine that I consider myself defeated: I merely waive the question, because I dislike the trouble of debating subjects in which I have little or no interest."

Another polite bow from Lionel, and a little deepening of the hot colour in his face. A retort was trembling on his lips, but a wiser impulse held it back.

She smiled as she spoke; her manner to him had seldom been more gracious than on that evening, still her words retained their sting, and he felt it more keenly perhaps than she could guess. She had thrown aside her needlework, and in its place took up a paper of brilliant-tinted wools, which she was busily sorting. Not a movement of hers was lost upon Lionel, not one turn of the proud, graceful head escaped him. The picture satisfied the artist's eyes, but the man's heart was hungering for that which might ever be denied him. It was then that he wished himself miles away from the hospitable roof of his father's old friend, wished also that he had never met the daughter, or suffered her dark, brilliant face to trouble the current of his life. Was he learning to love Caroline Arden?

At that moment there was an interruption in the presence of Mr. Arden—a welcome relief to each of the trio, with the exception, perhaps, of the young lady so composedly smiling and sorting her wools.

(To be continued.)

## THE WAGES OF SIN.

BY THE REV. ALFRED BARRY, D.D., PRINCIPAL OF KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS.

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom. vi. 23.

**I**N the Epistle from which the above words are quoted, you will see that St. Paul dwells plainly, and rather sternly, on the great choice which is set before every Christian—the choice between the service of God and the service of sin. He says (you

will observe) that he speaks "after the manner of men," that is, according to the usual way of speaking in the world, when he talks of a service of God, because that service is, indeed, a "service which is perfect freedom," and ought not for a moment to be compared to the service, which

is a real slavery, of sin. But he does so "because of the infirmity (or weakness) of our flesh;" because (that is) at first, while we judge by outward appearance, and before we enter into the real depths of the teaching of the Spirit of God, the service of God does seem to us a service—something often hard, often wearisome to us—something which we accept because we must, and for which we have to surrender our own will and take up the cross. He, the apostle himself, thought very differently. To him, as he said, "to live was Christ." To him, "to spend and be spent" for Christ was the one great joy of life, beyond all others, for which he counted them as nothing. But to make himself understood by all, he would put the question on the lower ground. He would set before his converts, as the minister of Christ, Sunday after Sunday, has to set before his people, the great choice: "Will you be servants of God or servants of sin?" If you are the servants of sin, he goes on to say, "you yield your bodies servants to iniquity unto iniquity;" you stoop to "things of which," in your better moments, "you are ashamed;" you become "free," gradually destitute of all thought and love of "righteousness." If you become servants of God, you are "free from sin;" you "yield your bodies to righteousness, and so to holiness." "You have some fruit unto holiness," of which you never will be ashamed in this world or the next. Such are the two kinds of service; and now what is their end? "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The alternative is, as I have said, put very plainly and even sternly; and it is remarkable that it should be so in the Epistle to the Romans, from which it comes. That Epistle, as all who know their Bibles must remember, is full of the offer of salvation through Christ, freely, and without any merit of ours, by the mercy of our heavenly Father, and by the atonement of his dear Son. In it St. Paul is especially anxious to set forth the need of faith, and of faith only, in order to lay hold of this great salvation. And he shows us—what every man's conscience will confess—how little anything that we can do can stand the searching judgment or deserve the blessing of God. But in spite of all this, he will not for one moment countenance the idea that it matters much what a man believes and feels, and little what he does; he dares not so deny the free will and the responsibility of man. In spite of all that Christ has suffered for us—in spite of that free mercy of God which delights to be gracious to his children, there is a choice still left to ourselves. We must for ourselves reject the service of sin, and take up the service of God. We must for ourselves remember the end, that the "wages of sin is death, and the gift of God eternal

life." There is not one of us who may not be saved—such is God's love; there is not one who may not be lost—such is the deadliness of sin. In different ways, at different times, the choice is always set before us, "Will ye be the servants of sin unto death, or the servants of God unto eternal life?"

Men may say, perhaps, "Is there nothing else between the two? May I not be free altogether, following my own will, and serve neither one master nor the other?" No, it is absolutely impossible. There is no life which, as a whole, is neither good nor bad. Times there may be in each life when it seems to stand still, like the water at the turn of the tide; but this is only for a moment—the tide must turn and flow one way or the other. God made us to serve him; there is not a power in our nature, there is not a thought of our hearts, which is not so given us that it may show forth his glory, and so work out our own happiness. And if we put this from us, and will not serve him, then we cannot help falling into evil, and becoming even the slaves of sin. The old childish teaching, that

"Satan finds some mischief still  
For idle hands to do,"

is widely and deeply true. The only safety from sin lies in the positive attempt to serve God—to do his commandments—to yield to his will—to throw ourselves on his grace. In this present world there seem to be generally three classes of men—the good and true servants of God—the determinately evil, devoted to the slavery of sin—and the great mass, who are indifferent, half persuaded, but not quite persuaded, ready (like the Jews on our Lord's entry into Jerusalem) to say, "Hosanna," to-day, and, "Crucify him," to-morrow. But as the eye of God looks down on this great mass, he sees it always being drawn one way or the other; melting away, as it were, into the two opposite bands. And at the great Day of Judgment you know that it will have disappeared. There will be no middle party then; but only those who are on the right hand, and those who are on the left hand, of the great white throne.

No! the two services are before you: and you will find that their character, even as services, is exactly opposite. The service of God (as I have already said) begins as a service; it seems often hard, often weary, often dull; we are driven to it perhaps by fear, or at best by a sense of duty, because we must, or because we ought. But as we go on in it, all the constraint and burden are gradually lightened; we learn to do it, not because we must, or because we ought, but because we love to do it. Our Saviour becomes more and more our friend—nearer and dearer than even the nearest and dearest earthly love. God is felt more and more as our Father, whom it is a joy to serve, even

by suffering. So we gradually begin to find that the knowledge and love of God is the very life of our souls, without which we cannot bear to live; and his service approaches more and more to perfect freedom. I say "approaches," because here, perhaps, the freedom is never quite perfect: for that, we must look to heaven, when the work of life is over, and the evening is come.

Now turn to the service of sin: you will find it exactly the opposite. It begins by promising you freedom. It says to you, "Why thwart yourself, and bind yourself by these many commandments of God? Why not do what you like and enjoy yourself while you may? Some day, perhaps, it may be well to do otherwise, but not now. Take your freedom. If God is so gracious and merciful, as they say, he will not grudge it you." And, unhappily, there are too many who listen to that voice of the tempter. One man gives way to his appetites—to gluttony, or drunkenness, or uncleanness. At first he seems, perhaps, to enjoy himself freely enough; but by degrees the chains of evil habit spread over him, and he becomes so bound, so entirely a slave, that nothing but the special grace of God can set him free. He knows, perhaps, that he is ruining or killing himself, but he cannot stop—he cannot even struggle against it—he has become the servant of sin indeed!

Another man, perhaps, gives way to what Holy Scripture calls the world. He chooses for his object in life money, or fame, or power, and devotes all his energies to get them. And soon he becomes a slave to the world; he dares not do what is right, lest he should lose money, or lest men should speak against him, and so he should lose his fame or his power. He goes on, often to falsehood and hypocrisy, often despising himself all the while, and longing to be free; but he has become the servant of the world, and he finds the world a hard master. So in these and many other ways, it is with sin; it begins by promising freedom, and, when we have believed it, we find ourselves slaves.

But what is the end? What are the wages, which sin has to offer? "The wages of sin," says St. Paul, "is death." I need not tell you, if you read your Bibles, how, for all mankind, this is literally true—that sin came into the world and death by sin—that, had it not been for sin, all that gives terror to death—its pain, its corruption, its unknown darkness—would never have been, and that man would have passed from a life of happiness and innocence on earth to the nearer presence of God in heaven.

But what does it mean, practically, to each one of us? What is the "death" which sin brings with it? I answer, "Misery in life, misery in death, misery in the world to come."

"Misery in life!" Look round even upon all the

poverty, the suffering, the sickness of our country. Do you not know that three parts of it come from sin? That if, for example, drunkenness and falsehood were rooted out, almost all of it would vanish like a dream. Think how, while I write, great nations of Christian men are wounding, and killing, and burning, and destroying, so that if not now, at least a few days hence, there will be thousands writhing in agony, and thousands more desolate in bereavement, or starving in destitution. And is this the will or the Providence of God? Is it not caused by the sin, the pride, the jealousy, the falsehood of man? But how much more, if you turn from suffering of body to anguish of soul! If only men were even moderately truthful and loving, pure and holy, you know that the world even now would be almost a paradise, with only just so much pain in it as to make men look onward to heaven.

So much for misery in life; but there is a misery also in death, which is the fruit of sin. Even to the true Christian there are often times when the old sins, repented of and forgiven long ago, still trouble the soul's peace; and he prays God he will not suffer him to fall away. Often when a man is just on the verge of drowning, or on the night before he is to die for his crimes, we hear that all the sins of childhood and youth and manhood came like a flash upon him in a moment, and almost drove him mad. And the wilful, impenitent sinner, who knows that it is too late—too late to repent and believe—too late to recall wasted time and wasted grace—too late for anything but judgment—in *his* death there is death indeed—the awful wages of sin!

But what shall we say of the future? God in his mercy has veiled that from us; we know not what shall be. But this we *do* know—for our Lord, who is to be the Judge, has told us—that there will be a searching, awful judgment for every act, for every idle word, for every thought of the heart; and that they who are found then in wilful, impenitent sin shall die the second death—cast away from the light of God's face into the "outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

But will not God's mercy interpose to stay these fruits of sin? We are told that "death is the wages of sin!" You know well that when work is done the master cannot justly withhold the wages—just as when work is not done he cannot give it, without harm as well as injustice. This death of misery is the just wages which sin has earned. True it is that for a long time, throughout all the day of life, from the first to the eleventh hour, God is always calling men to shake off sin's service and sin's wages—is always ready to forgive the past, as he did in David's case, even while, for the sinner's own sake, that

sin is scourged and punished. So is it with us men. God grant that we hear the call, through our Lord Jesus Christ! But there is a limit—there is a time, beyond which, so far as we know, repentance cannot be granted. Sin cannot be forgiven, or death kept from men, without outraging the justice of God, and destroying all the conscience and responsibility of man. We are told, in the grand and touching words of the Bible's oldest book, that to know that it is so, "repents God, and grieves him at the heart;" we remember that our Lord himself wept over Jerusalem, because his people would not hear him, and because he could not save them if they did not hear. We remember how, in his suffering on the cross, he said to the women, "Weep not for me: weep for yourselves, and your children." Just so a father bleeds at heart when he punishes his own son; and a judge is moved to tears when he gives sentence of death. But the wages which are earned must be paid; else God would cease to be God, and man would cease to be man.

It is a sad, a terrible message to give; but it is true, and it must be spoken. Think of it well, you who read these lines. If you will not give yourselves to God's service, you will, undoubtedly, fall into sin's bondage. It is not your

own heart, or the opinion of others—or even the sense of what is wise and prudent, that will keep you back. God's service and God's grace are your only safeguards. Then, next, if you will give yourselves to sin, you will become its slaves, bound in evil habits, which you cannot break, though your soul loathes and hates them. And, lastly, if you so become servants to sin, you must earn the wages of death—misery in life, misery in death, misery in the world to come.

It is true; but, thank God! it is not the whole truth. There is that other statement: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." But meanwhile, I pray you ponder this—the sad and awful side of the great truth; ponder it in your own hearts, and at your own private prayers. So far as you feel that you are gliding into sin, awake while it is yet time—pray to God for forgiveness, and struggle in his grace to break sin's chains. So far as God has kept you from sin, thank him, and take courage to go onward. It is still "the accepted time, and the day of salvation." Never, unless you choose it, need you die in sin's bondage, and find, to your unutterable sorrow, that the "wages of sin is death"—even the death eternal!

### "IN THE CORN-FIELDS."

#### I.

OUT among the golden sheaves,  
Reaping now and binding;  
Not a breath to stir the leaves,  
Sunlight hot and blinding.  
Piling up the bending shocks  
Of the full-eared corn,  
While gay-hearted laughter mocks  
The toil this autumn morn.  
Out among the ripe corn-fields,  
The fields of golden corn,  
Gathering wealth the glad earth yields  
On this autumn morn.

#### II.

Now the hour of noon is past,  
Labouring hands grow weary;  
Limbs are on the greensward cast,  
Hearts are light and cheery.  
Underneath the cooling shade,  
Where dense leaves are flinging  
Twilight by the branches made,  
And the brook runs singing.  
So they leave the ripe corn-fields,  
The fields of golden corn,  
And the wealth the glad earth yields  
Upon this autumn morn.

#### III.

Ah! there's one that waits behind,  
Mid the yellow corn,  
Not to reap and not to bind,  
On this autumn morn,  
Though the sickle's in her hand,  
Grasped by listless fingers;  
Mid the shocks I see her stand,  
While she looks and lingers  
Out among the ripe corn-fields,  
The fields of golden corn,  
Heeding not the wealth earth yields  
On this autumn morn.

#### IV.

Looks, with hand that shades her eyes,  
Many a broad field over,  
As with longing gaze she tries  
Some one to discover.  
And he comes! She sees him come,  
Fond and faithful ever.  
As the crow flies to his home,  
The brook flows to the river,  
Hastes he to the lone corn-fields,  
The fields of golden corn,  
To find the wealth that true love yields  
Upon this autumn morn.

J. F. WALLER.





"As with longing gaze she tries  
Some one to discover"—p. 40.

## CHILDREN'S HYMNS.

**N**o department of hymnology has a greater improvement been made than in hymns for children. Formerly it was either considered that they were not able to understand hymns at all, or else that they were to comprehend those intended for persons of riper years. In searching through the voluminous works of hymn-writers before the time of Dr. Watts, it is only here and there that we come across a hymn intended for children, and even then its suitability is often questionable. Now, every Sunday-school in the land has its choice of hymn-books, and in many instances schools have special books prepared for their own particular use. Every home has its "Hymns for Infant Minds," or some kindred work; and every month, in the magazine literature for young people, fresh hymns are being issued. It is only within the past few years, however, that the greatest improvements have been made. Until very recently, it was the habit of hymn-writers to dose poor children with dry theology, and put into their lips hymns of bitter experiences and spiritual conflicts, which it would have been unnatural for them to have realised, making them express desires for things which, in their childhood, it would be absolutely impossible for them to wish for. Probably truth has never been sacrificed more than in the way in which it has been presented to the youthful mind in hymns. They have been made to address a theological God—an unknown being to a child's mind. They have offered their hymns in a terrified spirit if done with the understanding, and in a hardened spirit if offered merely for form's sake, to One who has been represented as only a God of wrath; the One who brought the flood and will hereafter bring the fire; the One who can only dwell with the contrite and broken-hearted—a phase of experience which the little child cannot comprehend. Horrible hymns about death—a subject which should ever be presented in its least painful aspect to children; terrible hymns about hell—a subject which, though it should be taught to a child, should never form the burden of its song; narrative hymns, with highly-seasoned morals tagged on, as if the simple story were not sufficient to teach its own lesson—these, unhappily, have been too often the burden of children's hymns.

Dr. Watts may be regarded as the father of hymns for children. All honour to him for his work, and all honour to Sir Thomas and Lady Abney, at whose request he undertook it. Every parent in the land owes a debt of gratitude to the bachelor hymnist for having made the songs of children his special care; and as long as hymns are sung his name will be held in regard. But

good as his intention was, and useful, inasmuch as it opened up a new field for others to labour in, we cannot think that his verses for children are to be admired. Many of them are hard and dry doctrinal hymns, altogether beyond the comprehension of those for whom they were intended. Many of them are terrifying, and calculated to alarm children infinitely more than the legends of "Black Bogey" and "The Man with the Black Bag;" many of them teach children to be little Pharisees and hypocrites, than which worse lessons cannot be taught. The hymns sung in childhood should express childish hopes and joys and fears; they should be happy, gladsome praises; they should depict the beautiful and the loving and the good; and, as they remain in memory until life's last days, they should be such that they might convey messages of love and mercy in their bright and genial tone. It seems to us a great mistake to let children sing much about their sins, and especially about particular sins; but Dr. Watts did not think so, for he devoted much time to hymns "On the Sins of Youth" and their punishment. Here is a sample on speaking lies:—

"The Lord delights in them that speak  
The words of truth; but every liar  
Must have his portion in the lake  
That burns with brimstone and with fire.  
"Then let me always watch my lips,  
Lest I be struck to death and hell,  
Since God a book of reckoning keeps  
For every lie that children tell."

Surely such teaching as this is not judicious. What must the child's idea of the loving Father be, when taught to live in the dread lest "the register of children's lies" should be opened, and he should be struck to "death and hell?" How infinitely better it is to teach most prominently the blessings which result from truth, and then judiciously the punishment here and hereafter which sin of all kinds, when persisted in, must entail. How much better to teach that the Great Father is grieved at his heart when his children sin against him, that he is a long-suffering God, and that when he does "treasure up wrath," it is the wrath of a righteous indignation. Hymn after hymn, however, holds in it other teaching, representing God as only the terrible avenger, waiting to launch his thunderbolts upon the children's heads. As for example:—

"Idleness to foulest deeds  
Oft the young transgressor leads,  
Till detected in his ways,  
And cut off amidst his days."

This is the lesson to be learned from inattention to the calls of Heaven:—

"What if His dreadful anger burn,  
While I refuse His offered grace,  
And all His love to fury turn,  
And strike me dead upon the place!"

Here is a lesson against scoffing and calling names:—

"But lips that dare be so profane,  
To mock and jeer and scoff  
At holy things or holy men,  
The Lord shall cut them off."

Surely no one can think this to be a judicious way in which to teach the youthful minds of children about their "Father in heaven," or even to impress them with—what indeed is as necessary for us to teach them as the love of God—the true appreciation of the exceeding "sinfulness of sin," and the terrible future which awaits the unforgiven sinner, in this world and that which is to come. The thoughts of children should be directed, we think, as often as possible, to Him who said, "Suffer the children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven;" that Being who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and yet comprehensible to a child's mind.

Dr. Watts was strong upon the subject of punishment, and there is probably nothing in the whole range of children's literature in more objectionable taste than the hymn—

"There is a dreadful hell,  
And everlasting pains,  
Where sinners must for ever dwell  
In darkness, fire, and chains.

"Can such a wretch as I  
Escape this cursed end?  
And may I hope when'er I die  
I shall to heaven ascend?"

In searching through a considerable number of modern hymn-books for the young, we are grateful to find that only a very few by Dr. Watts are inserted. Some of them, however, are very good, and we shall ever be glad to retain such hymns as, "And now another day is done," "My God who makes the sun to know," "How glorious is our heavenly King," &c.

Charles Wesley wrote a few good hymns for children. One will live when all the others will probably be forgotten. It is this:—

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,  
Look upon a little child,  
Pity my simplicity,  
Suffer me to come to Thee," &c.

Not long since, at an open-air service, the preacher, in a powerful appeal, carried back the thoughts of his audience to the days of childhood, and reminded them of the time when, at their mothers' knees, they knelt and prayed this little prayer. A man between fifty and sixty years of age, tall and broadly built, but with haggard features which told of rough battling with the world, leant against a lamp-post while the preacher recited the lines. His chest heaved, and the big tears rolled down his cheeks; for the recital of that hymn led him back to the days of innocence and simplicity; led him to the memory of dear ones

who had prayed for him and watched over him in earlier days, and led him in simple faith to come back to the love of the heavenly Father whose mercies had been ever faithful and ever sure from childhood until then, although prayed for last in the sweet little hymn that Wesley wrote.

There are a few hymns retained in nearly every collection for children, which are always favourites, although they seem scarcely adapted to their capacities. The association of tunes with hymns is very often the secret of the charm, and it may be partly so in the case of one written by Robert Robinson:—

"Mighty God, while angels bless Thee,  
May an infant lip Thy name?" &c.

There was a little lad in whom Robinson took a loving interest, and one day, as he sat upon his knee, this hymn was written and given to him. That lad grew up to be a useful and influential man in the Christian Church, and to old age loved to tell the story of Robinson's hymn.

Another hymn of the class referred to is that by Reginald Heber:—

"From Greenland's icy mountains,"

The following account of its origin is extracted from "Singers and Songs of the Church:—

"On Whit-Sunday, 1819, the late Dr. Shipley, Dean of St. Asaph and Vicar of Wrexham, preached a sermon in Wrexham Church in aid of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. That day was also fixed upon for the commencement of the Sunday evening lectures intended to be established in that church; and the late Bishop of Calcutta (Heber), then Rector of Hodnet, the dean's son-in-law, undertook to deliver the first lecture. In the course of the Saturday previous, the dean and his son-in-law being together at the vicarage, the former requested Heber to "write something for them to sing in the morning," and he retired for that purpose from the table, where the dean and a few friends were sitting, to a distant part of the room. In a short time the dean inquired, 'What have you written?' Heber, having then composed the three first verses, read them over. 'There—there, that will do very well,' said the dean. 'No—no; the sense is not complete,' replied Heber. Accordingly, he added the fourth verse; and the dean being inexorable to his repeated request of, 'Let me add another; oh, let me add another,' thus completed the hymn which has since become so celebrated. It was sung the next morning in Wrexham Church for the first time."

Between fifty and sixty years after the death of Dr. Watts, the secrets of children's hearts were put into language, their thoughts were expressed in words that they could understand, and praises and hymns were made intelligible to them by the good sisters, Ann and Jane Taylor. The "Hymns for Infant Minds" introduced a new era in child-life—simple, unaffected, free from baby-talk, and

perfectly comprehensible; they went straight away to the hearts of children. Dr. Watts worked hard to raise the thoughts of children to his own stand-point, and of course failed; Ann and Jane Taylor worked hard to bring their thoughts down to the children's level, and succeeded.

"My method was," says Jane Taylor, "to shut my eyes and imagine the presence of some pretty little mortal, and then endeavour to catch, as it were, the very language it would use on the subject before me. If in any instances I have succeeded, to this little imaginary being I should attribute my success. And I have failed so frequently, because so frequently I was compelled to say, 'Now you may go, my dear; I shall finish the hymn myself.'" Written in this spirit, her verses are full of love, and teach of a loving Father, and a tender-hearted Saviour who is the children's friend. Nowhere do we find difficult theological words, or extravagant expressions of individual experience which no child of tender years could possibly have had. What can be more beautiful than this for a child's prayer?"—

"Great God, and wilt Thou condescend  
To be my Father and my Friend;  
I a poor child and Thou so high,  
The Lord of earth and air and sky?"

"Art Thou my Father? Canst Thou bear  
To hear my poor imperfect prayer?  
Or wilt Thou listen to the praise  
That such a little one may raise?"

"Art Thou my Father? Let me be  
A meek, obedient child to Thee;  
And try in word and deed and thought  
To serve and please Thee as I ought.

"Art Thou my Father? I'll depend  
Upon the care of such a Friend,  
And only wish to do and be  
Whatever seemeth good to Thee."

Dr. Arnold said well, when he gave it as his opinion that "the knowledge and love of Christ can nowhere be more readily gained by children than from these hymns." And Archbishop Whately, referring to two of the hymns on humility, says they give "a better practical description of Christian humility, and its opposite, than I have ever met with in so small a compass. Though very intelligible and touching to a mere child, a man of the most mature understanding, if not quite destitute of the virtue in question, may be the wiser and better for it."

Since the days when Ann and Jane Taylor issued their little book, many fresh writers of hymns have appeared, who seem to have caught their kind and loving spirit, and have set forth the sweet story of Divine love, in language which can find an echo in a child's heart.

One of the most popular hymns is Mrs. Luke's—

"I think when I read that sweet story of old."

The origin of this hymn gives us another instance of the fact that many of our best hymns have been

written impromptu. Mrs. Luke was one day travelling in a stage-coach, when the thought struck her to write something which should be suitable for use in the village school in which her father took an interest. As the coach rattled on its way she jotted down that hymn, which has been lisped by infant voices in every land, making music on earth and joy in heaven. Mrs. Luke, besides giving to the world this hymn, gives with it the lesson that the casual moments of life, so frequently allowed to slip idly away, may be made full of blessing, if there is only the strength of purpose to improve them; and hymn-writers would do well to learn also that good hymns are not those "made to order," but those which are caught in moments of inspiration. Mrs. Luke was a great friend of James Edmeston, the author of fifty hymns, collected under the title of "Infant Breathings, being Hymns for the Young," and many other occasional pieces, and it was at her suggestion that many of his best pieces for children were composed. His hymns are devout without dulness, solemn without sadness, lively without levity, and nearly every hymn has one distinct, special lesson to be taught in it. The following is a fair specimen:—

"God entrusts to all  
Talents few or many,  
None so young and small  
That they have not any;  
Though the great and wise  
Have a greater number,  
Yet my one I prize,  
And it must not slumber.

"God will surely ask,  
Ere I enter heaven,  
Have I done the task  
Which to me was given.  
Little drops of rain  
Bring the springing flowers,  
And I may attain  
Much by little powers.

"Every little mite,  
Every little measure,  
Helps to spread the light,  
Helps to swell the treasure,  
God entrusts," &c.

We cannot stay to tell of Mrs. Elizabeth Parsons, the author of

"O happy land! O happy land!"

and a score of others which will be sung by children for ages to come; nor of Mrs. Ann Shepherd, whose hymn,

"Around the throne of God in heaven,"

is in hundreds of cases the first hymn which children learn to sing; nor of Thomas Bilby, the writer of—

"Here we suffer grief and pain,"

perhaps a strange sentiment for a child, full of hope and glad some life, to utter, but a strangely popular hymn. Nor is it within our province to speak of the hymns for children from America, which are



rivalling in popularity even our most favourite English authors, and form the greater part of many of the Sunday-school collections in use in this country. But all such contributions are welcome, if they teach the truth as it is in Jesus; for lessons learnt in childhood are life-long lessons, and truths are more easily retained, especially by children, when expressed in easy flowing verse; and praise and prayer are the principal religious exercises of a child.

Great as have been the improvements in children's hymns, there is just one more which we should wish to see made—and that is, to let every hymn contain some *leading thought* in it. It is too often considered that childlike words musically

strung together are all that children require. This is a mistake—the great mistake of Americans, and we wish all hymn-writers would take a lesson from Canon Kingsley, whose little piece, entitled “A Farewell,” not strictly a hymn, but one of the sweetest ditties ever written for a child, may be held up as a model:—

“My fairest child, I have no song to give you,  
No lark could pipe to skies so dull and grey,  
Yet ere we part, one lesson I can leave you  
For every day:

“Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever,  
Do noble things, not dream them, all day long,  
And so make life, death, and that vast for ever  
One grand, sweet song.”

## THE MAN WITHOUT A MASTER.

BY THE REV. P. B. POWER, M.A., AUTHOR OF “THE OILED FEATHER,” “THE BAG OF BLESSINGS,” ETC.

### CHAPTER I.

**W**E sometimes hear of a young man or lad being a fine high-spirited youth; but very often we are quite unable to get at what is meant by this: for it does not always mean exactly the same thing. Sometimes it has reference to what is good; and more frequently to what is bad.

There are youths who are too high-spirited to tell a lie; or to see injustice done to the weak; or to have anything to do with what is mean and low; and there are others whose high spirit consists in being overbearing, and hasty, and passionate, and self-willed, and, as they think, independent.

Now Tom Toskins was of this latter stamp. Tom's father was dead; and his mother was left in very poor circumstances; and had it not been for the kindness of her brother, who was a baker in the town where they lived, things would have gone very hard with them indeed.

At the time of which we write, Tom Toskins was getting a great lad. He was fifteen years of age, and it was high time that he began to do something for himself. His only sister, Mary, who was a year younger, had already been two years with a dressmaker.

It had been Tom's misfortune to have an indifferent father. Of a violent and overbearing temper himself, he had seldom checked his son, so the youth grew up very like his parent.

Tom's mother had had a hard life of it with her husband; and now it seemed as though the poor woman were about to have a similar one with her son, if he remained under the same roof; for Tom “would brook no control—no, not he. He never had a master; and what was more, he never intended to have one. Let those who liked sneak on through life; he didn't mean to do anything of the kind.”

Tom Toskins often taunted his sister by

asking her whether her *mistress* would let her do this or that; and every honest apprentice he looked down upon as though he were some poor slave; and so time passed on, Tom living on his poor mother's earnings and his uncle's bounty; never considering that, instead of being a fine independent fellow, as he thought he was, he was, in fact, very little better than a mere beggar, dependent on the earnings of others; and that when he could have earned plenty for himself.

Now this state of things was not exactly to the mind of Tom's uncle, a worthy baker, who had worked hard all his life, and was so working still. Old Mr. Cottle had lived in times when people all kept in their proper places much better than they do now; and he had no notion of a great fellow's eating and drinking other people up, all because he wouldn't be under any authority or restraint, and would have no master.

Mr. Jonas Cottle was a man of very kind heart, but he could let out pretty freely when he was angry, which, to give him his due, was not often. But he could be angry, and could speak out his mind; and when he took to doing so, we should say that any person who could not understand what he meant, must have been very dull of comprehension.

And, just now, Mr. Jonas Cottle was very displeased with his nephew. The baker was alone in his shop, the day's work was done, and all that remained of the day's baking was a penny bun, near to which, on the counter, lay a half-quartern of flour.

“A regular scamp,” said Mr. Cottle, talking to himself, or, it may be, to the great flour-sack which stood just over the counter—“a good-for-nothing fellow that expects other people to support him. I dare say he's expecting something from me; but he shan't get a rap—no, not the value of that penny bun. Talk of his independence, indeed; I'd

like to know who's independent; I'd like to know if our Maker meant us to be independent. I don't think He did, or He wouldn't have said it was 'not good for man to be alone.' Mrs. Cottle thinks that's a true text, and so do I; but it cuts in very much upon independence, as perhaps it was intended it should do. Dear me, am not I dependent upon my customers? to be sure I am; and on my men? to be sure I am; and even if I had a thousand a-year, shouldn't I be dependent on Mrs. Cottle? to be sure I should. Dear me, how could I ever put buttons on my own shirts? though I'm told some folk, when they have been at sea, have had to do such things; and where should I be when I get the gout? dear me, if Mr. Cottle is not dependent on his wife, his great toe is. Look ye here," said the baker, seizing the half-quartern of flour in a very decided manner, "if you're to come to anything, aint you dependent? If you're to be made into paste, mustn't you be buttered and salted and kneaded?—or if you're to be made into cake, aint there no end of things to be done to you? and then, before you can be swallowed, mustn't there be a set of teeth to help you? For we're none of us independent, sir," said the baker, gradually losing sight of the half-quartern of flour, and substituting his nephew in its place, and speaking accordingly. "Do you hear me, sir? 'tis against all the laws of God; and against what's happening every day about us; and against our

very nature; and I tell you what it is, Tom, I don't give you another farthing—no, nor your mother either, unless she turns you out to do something for yourself; and if you don't, you deserve the cat-o'-nine tails,"—and hereupon the baker began to flourish his large bread-knife over the half-quartern, representing symbolically what was his nephew's due,—“and I hope you'll get them, that's all,” said the indignant old man, as he came down with a cut of the knife upon the unlucky half-quartern.

The result of this operation was not favourable to the future prospects of the half-quartern in question, for much of it was knocked over on the shop-floor, and spoiled; the remainder, however, afforded matter for reflection to the worthy baker, whose wrath was somewhat cooled by this little accident.

“No use putting an end to Tom, bad as he is,” said the worthy man; “he aint good to anybody that way. Here, I'm going to gather up what's left of this flour, and I'll see and gather up what's left of this scamp; there's no knowing whether something good might not be made out of him, even though it aint much.” Having thus said, the baker called his foreman, and directed him to make a first-class small cake with what was left of the flour, and to frost it and ornament it, and have it ready for him by the next evening.

(To be continued.)

### JOHN WILSON'S STRENGTH.

“**H**URRAH! mother, I have got it! Just fancy! three shillings a-week, and at the end of two months to be raised to five shillings; won't we have fires now, and every kind of thing? and no more stooping over the washing-tub for you.” So saying, John Wilson threw his cap into the air, and giving three cheers, finally sat down beside his mother, who looked astonished, and seemed to think that her son had taken leave of his senses.

“Tell me, lad, what is it all about?”

“Why, just this, mother: I thought it high time for me to begin and earn a little money, and to take care of you; so hearing that Dr. Elton wanted an errand-boy, I went to him, and asked for the place. Just then Mr. Hamilton came up, and he spoke for me, and said I was honest and truthful, and I told the doctor, too, that I had never told a lie in my life.”

“That is something to thank God for, my lad, but nought to be proud of.”

“I'm not so sure of that,” murmured John. “The doctor seemed quite pleased, and told me to be there at eight o'clock every morning. I am to get all my

meals there, and to be home here at six o'clock every evening. Now, mother, what do you think of that?”

“I think a great deal of it, Johnnie,” she replied kindly; but there was still a grave look upon her face, for she feared that strength in which Johnnie trusted, might fail him at the moment he needed it most.

“How came you to ask for the place?” she inquired, after a pause.

“Mr. Hamilton has been wanting me to get work this long time to help you; so you see I have at last. The minister was very kind in speaking for me, though, if I must tell the truth, mother, he did say he wished I was more humble.”

“Yes, Johnnie, the minister is right: the more humble we are, the less we lean on our own strength, and the more we lean on our Lord, the better we shall be, and the less likely we shall be to displease him. I should have little fear of you, lad, if I thought you asked the Lord's help and guidance every morning.”

“Don't be afraid, mother—I'll keep straight enough; see if I don't, it will be easy work. I shall only have to carry medicines for unfortunate wretches to swallow;

not much fear of my going wrong there, or stealing any of them to drink, even if I do feel thirsty."

"Great fear of doing wrong, I think," said a voice behind him, "if you have too much confidence in yourself. Did you ever hear the old proverb, John, 'Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall?' I don't like to hear you boasting, Johnnie; if you have been kept freer from temptation than other boys, you have all the more to be thankful for; but until you are tried, you cannot judge of your strength to resist temptation."

Johnnie had started up on hearing Mr. Hamilton's voice, and now he thought he was rather hard on him; but he answered respectfully, "Of course, I meant to say, with God's help, sir."

"If you really mean that, John," replied Mr. Hamilton, "you are safe enough, for we know our God never refuses his help to those who ask for it; but I am afraid you think you can get on very well by yourself."

John Wilson looked rather ashamed, for he knew what Mr. Hamilton said was true, and as the minister had turned to speak to his mother, Johnnie went out.

"It will be a great help to me, sir, Johnnie getting this place. I am not as strong as I was, and the washing is too much for me. Thank you kindly, sir, for speaking of him."

"I would not have recommended him, did I not think he deserved it. He is anxious to help you, in every way, though he is rather too confident of himself, and has not yet learned his need of higher help."

"Yes, sir, that is his fault; he is as kind and affectionate to me as I could wish, and I thank the Lord for giving me such a son."

"It is a blessing, Mrs. Wilson," replied her minister, "and I pray God may prosper him and guard him in his new occupation;" and with a kind nod and smile, Mr. Hamilton left the cottage.

Johnnie began his work at Dr. Elton's, and found it easy enough, carrying bottles of medicine to different houses, and little mysterious parcels, the contents of which were to give rest to the weary and ease to the suffering. For a time the doctor had no fault to find with him; he was punctual in the mornings, and gave no cause for complaint; but as the weather got colder, and the mornings darker, Johnnie began to think getting up so early very tiresome, and his mother found she had to light the fire, and tidy the cottage, instead of Johnnie doing it for her, as of old.

The truth was, the novelty of the work was wearing off, and Johnnie was getting tired of it. He was now constantly after his time, the medicines were delivered at the wrong houses, and Johnnie often stopped on his way with his messages to have a game of football or take a hand at cricket. Johnnie did not find it so easy to keep straight, still he thought he could manage himself, and the bedside prayer was left unsaid, and help and guidance unsought.

No wonder John Wilson got careless at his work. Dr. Elton at last told him, unless he improved he must get another boy. This threat frightened Johnnie, who for a time went on better.

He was now earning five shillings a-week, which was a great help to his mother, and Johnnie liked to help her. The washing was given up, and Mrs. Wilson was able to take some easier work, and was getting stronger and better in consequence.

But this did not last long. Johnnie had yet to learn that he had no strength of himself, to help himself, and that without God's help he could do nothing. Johnnie had started one day, carrying a bottle of medicine to a poor woman who lived some way out of the town; he had not got very far, just outside its suburbs, when he met some companions.

"Come, have a game of football, John, it will warm you this cold day."

"No—no, I can't: I wish I could; but the doctor told me to hurry back after leaving this with Mrs. Brown," and he held up the bottle of medicine.

"Put it in your pocket till afterwards, you will have lots of time; and see! look at this jolly new ball; you shall have the first kick at it, if you come."

Johnnie took up the ball, looked at it, then felt it, and finally gave it the desired kick. Off it flew, and the boys after it.

"Just one turn, and then I'm off to old Brown," said Johnnie; but the one turn became a great many turns, and all thoughts of Mrs. Brown, Dr. Elton, and the medicine went out of his head. The game might have lasted hours, as there seemed no chance of the boys' getting tired, but a fall and a cry of pain from Johnnie brought it to a speedy conclusion. Johnnie had tripped, and in falling had not only broken the bottle but sprained his ankle. Now, indeed, he was sorry he had yielded to his companions' entreaties. The pain from his ankle was severe enough, and he had to call upon his friends to lift him to the roadside. When once he was there, he longed to be rid of them again.

"What will the doctor say, if he finds out what I have done?" moaned Johnnie; "perhaps send me off, and then what will poor mother do? She will be so sorry, and have to take to the washing again; Oh! that must never—never happen!" and regardless of the eyes of his companions, the tears rolled down Johnnie's face.

"Don't tell him, Johnnie," said one of his companions.

"Say you fell, and broke it," said another; and Johnnie stopped, and listened to what they urged, though he knew in his heart that deceiving his master was just as wrong as telling a lie.

Alas for Johnnie's strength! Was fear going to conquer Johnnie, or was Johnnie going to conquer fear? Was the boy who never told a lie going to tell one on the first provocation?

Johnnie had very little time to make up his mind what he should say, for to his terror he saw the doctor's gig fast approaching, and the doctor, on seeing him sitting by the roadside, instantly pulled up.

"How is Mrs. Brown, Johnnie?"

That was a question John never thought of having to answer, and he replied, "Better, sir."

The lie was told, the sin was sinned, and where was Johnnie's boasted strength? The doctor never doubted him, and offered him a lift home in the back of the gig, but as Johnnie stood up and tried to walk the pain came on again, and he could not stir.

"Hollo, what's the matter?" cried the doctor, getting down; "hurt, are you? fell and sprained your ankle. Well, never mind, my boy, I will cure you in no time; but we had better drive straight home to your mother."

"Only a sprain, my good woman," said the doctor, cheerfully, as Mrs. Wilson appeared in the doorway at the sight of the doctor carrying her son. "Make haste and get him to bed;" and the doctor, suiting his actions to his words, began taking off the boy's coat, when, lo! to Johnnie's dismay, out fell the broken bottle.

"What is the meaning of this, John?" asked Dr. Elton, gravely.

Johnnie could not answer, his face was buried in his hands, and he was crying bitterly.

"I can tell how it happened," said Mr. Hamilton, who had come in, and was standing by, as the broken bottle fell out. "I saw it all, but I waited to see what Johnnie would do, and if," said Mr. Hamilton, very gravely, "he could stand alone."

Johnnie could not look up, Mrs. Wilson had lifted him into his bed, and through all his pain and trouble he heard his mother's deep sigh, as Mr. Hamilton told all he knew about his fall.

"Let him rest now," said the doctor; "he will suffer enough seeing his mother in distress, and knowing that he is the cause of it."

"Let me say one word, doctor, please," said Johnnie, sitting up, and looking very pale. "I am sorry, sir, for what I have done, that is all I can say; I know it was all my own fault, and if I had minded all Mr. Hamilton and mother told me, this would never have happened. I am an awful bad, proud boy, I know, and the worst of it is, it will all fall on poor mother, and no one will ever trust me again." Johnnie buried his face in the pillow, to keep back his sobs.

"Well, my boy," said Dr. Elton, kindly, "you have made a confession now, and be thankful you were found out in your first lie. You have my forgiveness Johnnie, and you must try and get well soon, for if this has really taught you a lesson, and I think it has, I shall not be afraid to trust you again." So saying, the kind doctor took his leave, taking Mr. Hamilton with him.

"Mother," said Johnnie, "come and sit by me.

You see, the minister was right, after all; 'pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.' Mother, dear, I would suffer three times the pain I have now, not to have vexed you; you'll forgive me, won't you, dear old mother?" and he put his arms round her neck.

"Yes, my boy, indeed I will, and God Almighty will forgive you also, if you ask him, for you have sinned grievously against him, lad."

"Yes, mother, I know I have, and were he not so good and kind he might have sent me a worse punishment than this, mother."

"Yes, Johnnie, the good Lord might have left you alone, that would have been worse than all."

During the weeks that Johnnie was laid up with his sprained ankle, and unable to earn any money, Mrs. Wilson had to take to the washing again, and her son, from his bed in the corner, watched with a real sorrow the flush of hard work rising each day upon her cheek, which died down in the evening, leaving her face more pale and careworn than he had ever seen it before. Mr. Hamilton came often to see them and talk to them, and one day, Mrs. Wilson being out, Johnnie's repentant grief broke forth, and he told Mr. Hamilton that one of the sorest punishments he had to endure for his sin was to watch his poor mother struggling to procure the money which formerly it had been his duty and pleasure to earn.

Mr. Hamilton quite entered into the boy's grief, and though he spoke very kindly and comfortingly to him, at the same time he pointed out to him how, in almost every instance, the consequence of a sin is sure to fall on the innocent head as well as on the guilty; and he said he was certain the sight of his mother's suffering would be a lesson to Johnnie all his life.

"Yes, sir, I don't think I shall forget this lesson, though I am almost afraid to say anything for fear I should go wrong again."

"You can do all things through Christ, Johnnie; you must not be afraid of asking his help."

"No, sir," said Johnnie, humbly, "I hope I may never do anything without his help. I mean, sir, when once I am up again, to print that text in Proverbs about pride, so that I may always have it before my eyes, and never forget it."

"St. Paul tells us, Johnnie, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'"

"I know, sir; I was reading that the other day, and also the text you taught me before: 'I can do all things through Christ.'"

"Yes, my boy, with Him who calls himself our Brother on our side, we can do all things. We are promised, you know, Johnnie, that as our day is, so shall our strength be."

Johnnie did not forget the lesson his illness taught him, and Dr. Elton had never cause to repent giving him a second trial.